

April 4, 2008

TO: Dave Schiel, Employee Relations Specialist  
Washington Public Employees Association (WPEA)

FROM: Teresa Parsons  
Director's Review Program Supervisor

SUBJECT: Eileen Sharp v. Department of Revenue (DOR)  
Allocation Review Request ALLO-07-011

On January 3, 2008, I conducted a Director's review conference call concerning the allocation of Ms. Sharp's position. Present during the Director's review conference were you and Ms. Sharp; Senior Human Resources Consultant Dorothy Hibbard, representing DOR; and Julie King and Bridgit Feeser also with DOR.

### **Background**

Ms. Sharp submitted a Classification Questionnaire (CQ), dated September 14, 2006, to DOR's Human Resources (HR) Office, requesting that her position (#70119218) be reallocated from the Office Assistant Senior (Office Assistant 3) classification to the Secretary Administrative classification. The HR Office received Ms. Sharp's request on October 2, 2006 (Exhibit A-5). On November 28, 2006, the HR Office received an updated Position Description Form (PDF), signed by Ms. Sharp and her supervisor on June 29, 2006, and signed by the appointing authority on November 27, 2006 (Exhibit 3). By letter dated January 5, 2007, Ms. Hibbard notified Ms. Sharp her position was properly allocated to the Office Assistant 3 classification. The allocation determination was mailed on January 18, 2007 (Exhibit A-6).

On February 20, 2007, the Department of Personnel received Ms. Sharp's request for a Director's review of DOR's allocation determination, filed by Leanne Blood, WPEA.

### **Summary of Ms. Sharp's Perspective**

At the time Ms. Sharp requested reallocation, she indicated the Secretary Administrative classification best described her duties. During the Director's review conference, you and Ms. Sharp believed the Secretary Senior classification was more appropriate.

Specifically, Ms. Sharp contends her duties go beyond the Office Assistant 3 class because she reports to a Washington Management Service (WMS) Field Audit Manager position and serves as the designated support person for the Spokane audit staff. Further, Ms. Sharp asserts that she serves as the liaison between her supervisor and the audit staff, and she states that she coordinates the preparation of documents, makes travel arrangements, and manages the inventory and ordering of supplies for the Spokane office.

### **Summary of DOR's Reasoning**

While DOR recognizes that Ms. Sharp performs complex clerical assignments, the department asserts the majority of her duties fall within the Office Assistant 3 classification. Specifically, DOR describes Ms. Sharp's role in the Spokane office as independently performing a variety of complex clerical tasks, verifying and processing records, responding to inquiries, and relaying messages and information from her supervisors to audit staff, including field auditors. DOR asserts most of Ms. Sharp's duties involve proofreading documents, data entry, serving as receptionist, and ordering supplies. DOR contends Ms. Sharp does not perform delegated duties from her supervisor's position. DOR further contends Ms. Sharp's position has not been tasked with budget-related duties at the Secretary Senior level. DOR asserts the travel arrangements made by Ms. Sharp are not at a level reflecting the development of an itinerary and only make up a small portion of her overall work. DOR believes the Office Assistant 3 best describes Ms. Sharp's position.

### **Director's Determination**

This position review was based on the work performed for at least the six-month period prior to October 2, 2006, the date the Human Resources Office received Ms. Sharp's request for reallocation.

As the Director's designee, I carefully considered all of the documentation in the file, the exhibits presented during the Director's review meeting, and the verbal comments provided by both parties. Based on my review and analysis of Ms. Sharp's assigned duties and responsibilities, I conclude her position is properly allocated to the Office Assistant 3 classification.

### **Rationale for Determination**

During the Director's review conference, you described Ms. Sharp's duties as follows:

- Proofreading and processing audits (25%)
- Data entry (20%)
- General office support to include correspondence, filing, and other related duties (20%)
- Travel arrangements (15%)
- Office purchasing and space management (15%)

- Supervisory liaison: serving as a conduit for information from the supervisor to the audit staff and vice versa (5%)

Overall, the duties are similarly described in portions of the Classification Questionnaire (CQ) submitted for reallocation (Exhibit A-3) and the Position Description Form (PDF) (Exhibit B-3). For example, the CQ identifies the majority of work (85%) as proofreading, travel arrangements, coordination of documents, receptionist (first contact for incoming calls) and serving as a liaison between supervisor and staff.

Similarly, the Position Objective on the PDF states Ms. Sharp's position has responsibility for independently performing a variety of complex clerical projects for the Audit Manager (her supervisor) and his staff. The duties are described as creating reports; preparing, reviewing, verifying, and processing fiscal documents; establishing filing systems/databases; performing specialized and complex data inquiry/entry and word processing tasks; general receptionist duties; and clerical and data entry support for the entire Spokane Audit staff.

The majority of work on the PDF (65%) identifies the specific duties as preparation of numerous electronic reports that include production, assignment inventory, equipment inventory, IRS data, and travel. The work functions include formatting worksheets, creating formulas, tables, and graphs, and then distributing the reports to the appropriate person. This section also references Ms. Sharp's duties involving complex data entry for auditors, as well as the coordination of confidential IRS documents.

The remaining duties on the PDF indicate Ms. Sharp handles mail and messages, distributing information and materials to the appropriate person; processes checks and delivers to the Compliance section; organizes and maintains supplies; maintains the printer, copier, mail and file areas; and serves as the main receptionist for audit staff.

During the Director's review conference, Ms. Sharp clarified that her role as liaison between her supervisor and the audit staff involved taking messages for audit staff in the field and maintaining contact information so she can get a hold of the Audit Manager or staff, as needed. Ms. Sharp explained that she is the primary contact person when an auditor is in the field and will retrieve and relay information when asked by an auditor. Ms. Sharp further stated she will perform tasks for auditors in the field, such as doing a MapQuest or contacting a taxpayer to let that individual know that an auditor is running late. In addition, Ms. Sharp stated that her supervisor will leave information with her to pass on to the auditors, which she described as "delegated authority." Ms. Sharp acknowledged that she does not sign documents on behalf of her supervisor.

During the conference, Ms. Hibbard recognized Ms. Sharp's role in "serving as a conduit" of information between her supervisor and others in the office. However, based on conversations with Ms. Sharp's supervisor, Field Audit Manager Kurt Sedlacek, and Regional Audit Manager Scott Garrison, Ms. Hibbard concluded Ms. Sharp's role as liaison involved getting a hold of others and relaying messages, not providing any

substantial auditing information. This is consistent with Ms. Sharp's statements describing contact with auditors in the field.

#### Comparison of Duties to Secretary Administrative

The Class Series Intent for the Secretary Administrative classification reads as follows:

In support of a supervisor and/or staff members, provides secretarial services and assistance for the purpose of facilitating the supervisor's and/or staff members' own work and relieving the supervisor and/or staff members of day-to-day clerical detail. Applies knowledge of supervisor's and/or staff members' work commitments including status of projects and nature of contacts. Secretarial duties include making travel arrangements, scheduling meetings, taking notes and transcribing minutes, screening calls and visitors, keeping supervisor's and/or staff members' calendar(s) and committing supervisor's and/or staff members' time.

The Secretary Administrative definition states that positions perform "administrative and secretarial support duties for a manager or administrator."

The distinguishing characteristics include performing higher level administrative duties with delegated authority and/or providing and coordinating administrative support functions for a large unit having multiple supervisors. Higher level administrative duties are described as follows:

Duties of a substantive nature that are appropriate to the supervisor's or other professional level class, but have been delegated to the Secretary Administrative to perform. Duties include administering, providing and/or coordinating functions such as budget development and/or management, expenditure control, office space management, public relations, personnel administration, records management, equipment purchases, and report preparation.

In addition, Secretary Administrative positions represent the supervisor's and/or unit's goals and interests and provide interpretation or explanation of supervisor's policies or viewpoints.

I acknowledge that Ms. Sharp reports to the Audit Manager in the Spokane office; however, her position has not been delegated higher-level administrative duties appropriate to her supervisor's or another professional's class level. Although Ms. Sharp disseminates information and delivers messages from her supervisor, she has not been assigned the level of responsibility that would include functions such as budget development or expenditure control. Instead, her position is tasked with duties such as processing checks and ordering supplies/maintaining inventory, duties which are primarily clerical in nature. The overall duties assigned to Ms. Sharp's position do not meet the level or scope intended for the Secretary Administrative class.

### Comparison of Duties to Secretary Senior

Both the Secretary Senior and the Office Assistant 3 classes were part of the Clerical, Office Support and Secretarial Occupational Category at the time relevant to this review. As such, the category concept states that positions “provide a variety of clerical services and/or secretarial duties in support of a work unit, department, supervisor(s), staff members, and/or general day-to-day office operations.” Ms. Sharp’s position clearly fits within this occupational category. However, similar to the Secretary Administrative class, the Secretarial Classes are distinguished from Clerical Office Support classes by the primary focus of providing secretarial services and assistance to one or more individuals. In addition, secretarial positions typically facilitate the supervisor’s own work, applying knowledge of the supervisor’s work commitments, status of projects, nature of contacts, and will often make commitments for the supervisor’s time. In contrast, positions in Clerical Office Support classes perform a variety of clerical duties in support of office or unit operations.

The distinguishing characteristics of the Secretary Senior class describe complex secretarial duties as independently planning, organizing and prioritizing work; monitoring and evaluating budget(s) status and initiating corrections; developing travel itineraries; compiling reports, studies, and/or applications; developing, modifying, and/or maintaining data base management, office record keeping or filing system(s); establishing office procedures, standards, priorities, and deadlines; and coordinating office operations. Positions initiate action to ensure work unit and/or office goals are met and have frequent contacts with clients, the public, and staff members from other departments.

Ms. Sharp’s position primarily prepares and processes electronic reports, prints audit reports, performs data entry, creates electronic documents using a variety of software programs, coordinates documents, and serves as the primary receptionist for the office. Ms. Sharp’s position has not been assigned the developing or monitoring aspects of the work that help facilitate her supervisor’s work. The duties assigned to her position are more consistent with the Office Assistant 3 classification.

### Comparison of Duties to Administrative Assistant 3

In considering the Administrative Assistant 3 classification, I first looked at the series concept as identified in the Administrative Assistant 1 distinguishing characteristics, which include the following:

Administrative Assistants can be distinguished from clerical positions by the formal delegation and regular exercise of the following responsibilities:

- (a) reviewing the work of professional staff for completeness, to assure that input-output is in compliance with laws, rules, policies, procedures and standards;

- (b) controlling the professional staff's work by directing changes, corrections and authorizing exceptions to ensure compliance with the supervisor's schedules and priorities;
- (c) prioritizing the professional staff's workload within established guidelines; and
- (d) coordinating the professional staff's work within an agency, between agencies, with the public and/or other governmental entities.

OR

The technical work addressed in the definition is distinguished by a professional position fully delegating a technical portion of the position's duties which in turn encompasses the majority of the Administrative Assistant's work and can be traced to originate directly from a professional position's duties and responsibilities.

Administrative Assistant positions do not report to a Clerical Supervisor. Their work is not clerical or secretarial as stated in those class specifications. However, only positions at this level in the class series may be assigned some clerical and/or secretarial duties not to exceed 25% of the total work.

The distinguishing characteristics of the Administrative Assistant 3 include "delegation of full responsibility for one or more of the major activities under the supervisor." Also, positions typically prepare correspondence for the supervisor's signature and sign correspondence as the Administrative Assistant. Ms. Sharp's position has not been assigned signature authority.

The Washington State Classification and Pay Guide defines administrative work as duties involving determination and/or active participation in making policy, formulating long-range objectives and programs, and reviewing the implementation of programs for conformance to policies and objective.

Ms. Sharp's position has not been delegated the level of responsibility envisioned in the Administrative Assistant classes. In addition, her duties are primarily clerical in nature and exceed 25% of her overall work. Therefore, the Administrative Assistant 3 is not the appropriate classification.

Comparison of Duties to Office Assistant 3

Although Ms. Sharp works independently, her duties involve complex clerical assignments and are consistent with the level of work and distinguishing characteristics of the Office Assistant 3 class, which include:

- Preparing reports;
- Preparing, reviewing, verifying, and processing fiscal documents;
- Composing correspondence;
- Responding to frequent requests for information;
- Establishing recordkeeping/filing systems and data base files;
- Responding to inquiries requiring substantive knowledge of office/departmental policies and procedures.

Although the examples of work do not form the basis for an allocation, they lend support to the work envisioned within a classification. The examples of work at the Office Assistant 3 level most comparable to Ms. Sharp's assignment of work include:

- Resolving problems and responding to inquiries regarding rules, regulations, policies, department procedures, and department services; answering telephone; receiving and referring visitors;
- Reviewing documents and records for completeness and accuracy;
- Composing office correspondence such as requests for documentation and responses to requests for information; devising, evaluating and revising forms for internal use;
- Reviewing and verifying fiscal reports for accuracy; correcting errors to ensure compliance with established procedures and policies;
- Establishing and maintaining complex electronic or manual file systems or data base files;
- Preparing or assists in the preparation, compilation, and coordination of reports and records such as financial, equipment usage, purchasing, and inventory;
- Compiling and producing material such as statistical reports requiring specialized knowledge and judgment in selection and treatment of data and format; and preparing tables, charts and graphs as required;
- Ordering, receiving and maintaining inventory.

I recognize that some of Ms. Sharp's duties may be similar in nature to the work identified in the Secretary Senior class, such as arranging travel, and that she may occasionally perform duties outside of her classification. The Personnel Resources Board (PRB) addresses such an issue in the following decision:

Most positions within the civil service system occasionally perform duties that appear in more than one classification. However, when determining the appropriate classification for a specific position, the duties and

responsibilities of that position must be considered in their entirety and the position must be allocated to the classification that provides the best fit overall for the majority of the position's duties and responsibilities. See Dudley v. Dept. of Labor and Industries, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-07-007 (2007).

Based on the majority of work assigned to Ms. Sharp's position, as well as the scope and level of responsibility, the Office Assistant 3 classification best describes her position.

### **Appeal Rights**

RCW 41.06.170 governs the right to appeal. RCW 41.06.170(4) provides, in relevant part, the following:

An employee incumbent in a position at the time of its allocation or reallocation, or the agency utilizing the position, may appeal the allocation or reallocation to . . . the Washington personnel resources board . . . . Notice of such appeal must be filed in writing within thirty days of the action from which appeal is taken.

The address for the Personnel Resources Board is 2828 Capitol Blvd., P.O. Box 40911, Olympia, Washington, 98504-0911.

If no further action is taken, the Director's determination becomes final.

c: Eileen Sharp  
Dorothy Hibbard, DOR  
Lisa Skriletz, DOP

Enclosure: List of Exhibits